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What is wrong with the CIA's Robert M. Gates?

by Criton Zoakos

On Feb. 24, 1986, the deputy director of the CIA, John McMahon, resigned secretly, at approximately the same time as the President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, was almost forcibly being placed in an American aircraft en route to Guam. The man who replaced McMahon, Robert M. Gates, was, prior to these events, at the private residence of Secretary of State George F. Shultz, taking care of the final details of the toppling of Marcos, together with John Poindexter, chief of the NSC, Michael Armacost, Richard Armitage, Paul Wolfowitz and Philip Habib. The news was made public one full week after the event. No explanation was given, nor is the promotion of Gates necessarily connected with the "preemptive destabilization" of the Philippines.

The promotion of the 42-year-old Mr. Gates is yet another calamity for the intelligence effort of the United States: Mr. Gates, through his past contributions, has been intimately associated with one of the great disasters of American intelligence, the infamous "crumbling Soviet Empire" thesis, now dominant in government thinking. This thesis, which downplays the Soviet threat to the West on grounds that the "rotten" Soviet economy is collapsing from within and that ethnic and religious revolts are about to topple Soviet power, began gaining currency during 1982, the year in which CIA Director William Casey made Robert Gates deputy director for intelligence at the CIA, and chairman of the National Intelligence Council, which produces the National Intelligence Estimates of the United States Government. That was also the year in which the experienced Prof. Richard Pipes was unceremoniously kicked out of the National Security Council, to be replaced, first by 30-year-old "Russian expert" John Lenczowski, and, later, by Carter-era diplomat Jack F. Matlock.

Under the direction of Robert Gates, who, in his professional circle, is reputed to be the CIA's "best" Soviet analyst, the CIA, in 1983, produced a report on the Soviet economy, stating that mismanagement, corruption, and inefficiency had all but doomed the Soviet system to an untimely death. One year later, in 1984, Gates himself, testifying before Congress, further elaborated that the "crumbling Soviet Empire," suffers from "a perverse system of incentives [which] promotes inefficient behavior by enterprise managers and dampens the introduction of new technology into the economy."

The implications for United States security concerns, according to this "crumbling Empire" theory, are that the Soviet leadership is embarking on "reforms," which include the transfer of managers and resources from the military to the civilian sector of the Soviet economy, thus diminishing the potential Soviet threat to U.S. security.

EIR had occassion, in early 1983, to doubt Mr. Gates' professional credentials as the "CIA's best" Soviet expert, at a time when *EIR* first circulated its analysis that all Soviet policy making is determined by the Russian-chauvinist "Third and Final Rome" tendency, associated with the military elite and the Andropov-Gorbachov power combination. The response, in 1983, to our "Third Rome" analysis, from Mr. Gates' general direction was: "There is no such 'Third Rome' tendency; and, what is this 'Third Rome,' anyway?"

Ignorance of that school of Russian statecraft associated with the "Third Rome" would be enough to disqualify anyone from professional intelligence duties. Apparently, the ignorance of the CIA's Soviet experts under Mr. Gates, was somehow, protected. As the debate between the two contending analyses, "Third Rome," versus "crumbling Empire," grew, it became obvious that the ignoramuses at the various "analysis" desks of the CIA, were enjoying more than protection: the protectors of the "crumbling Empire" folly were engaged in a deception.

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